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ABSTRACT

In order to assess the attitudes of Harcum Junior College students in regard to education in general, the school curriculum, school resources, and school counseling, a questionnaire was administered to all Harcum students in the fall of 1975, with 258 anonymous respondents. Since respondents were enrolled in all programs except the pre-pharmacy curriculum, the sample was broadly representative of the attitudes prevalent among the current student body. The Assessment of Student Attitudes (ASA) was used as the measuring instrument. The instrument consists of 26 positive and negative statements to be rated on a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree). Arrangement of the results by academic major of the respondents generates data which should be of interest to program directors. The composite responses for each of the four attitudinal subscales, assuming 100 percent as the ideal score, are: (1) Attitudes Toward Curriculum, 62 percent; (2) Attitudes Toward Education in General, 60 percent; (3) Attitudes Toward School Resources, 56 percent; (4) Attitudes Toward School Counseling, 48 percent. (NHM)

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(VI)

Student Attitudes Regarding Harcum Learning Environment

1. In April 1975, Mark W. Blair, Evaluation Specialist, and Keith M. Kersher, Director of Evaluation for the Career Education Program of Research for Better Schools, Inc., Philadelphia, Pa. presented a paper at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. This paper discussed the development and validation of an instrument to assess student attitudes toward traditional and non-traditional learning environments. They also co-authored a paper entitled, "Assessment of Student Attitudes Toward Learning". April 1975.

2. The measuring instrument designed after several revisions, the Assessment of Student Attitudes (ASA), consisted of 26 items which were constructed to yield four subscales: Attitude Toward Education in General; Attitude Toward School Curriculum; Attitude Toward School Resources; Attitude Toward School Counseling. The format designed for each response to these 26 items was a five-point Likert scale. These scaled items were presented in a questionnaire to all Harcum students in the Fall of 1975. Some 258 juniors and seniors responded anonymously to the questionnaire. They are enrolled in all Harcum programs but the Pre-pharmacy curriculum; therefore are broadly representative of the attitudes prevalent among the current Harcum student body.

3. For each item in the instrument, response options are presented as a five-point scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". Weights of 1 to 5 are assigned respectively to each response item, the total score being the summation of all weights.

4. As the developers of this instrument noted in their April 1975 paper; "Likert's scaling technique was selected for the construction of scales of student attitudes toward learning environments since the developed instrument would rest neither on the ratings of judges nor on techniques which have been criticized for the lack of unequal intervals in the scales. The Likert approach has the added advantage of resultant summation scores which are an efficient means of securing information on individual and group attitudes, and which require no extensive written responses. An instrument consisting of Likert scales can also be administered and scored easily."

5. For the above-stated cogent reasons, the ASA instrument was considered to be an excellent means for assessing the attitudes of Harcum's current student body regarding the learning environment at the College. Group differences in collective attitudes are presented. These facts should be of particular interest to Program Directors as they reveal the attitudes of current students who have selected their programs of preparation. Other teaching faculty and staff-technical personnel will also find here information directly relating to student assessments of their areas of responsibility.

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6. Among the 26 statements included in the ASA instrument 7 items were designed to assess student attitudes Toward Education in General. The maximum score (or 'best' in terms of positive attitudes expressed), on a scale of 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 - Strongly Agree, would ideally be 5 points for each of the following 3 items multiplied by the number of student-respondents:

(1) I've learned a lot from my college program.
(2) Some of the ideas I've gotten in college have helped me get interested in some new areas.
(3) I like college because I learn a lot of things there.

7. Conversely, for the following 4 items, a low number of 1, on a scale of 1- Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree, would represent the maximum positive attitude. Therefore, the ideal score would be 1 point for each of the following items multiplied by the number of respondents:

(4) College has always been boring - I can hardly wait until I'm out.
(5) My parents are not very excited about the education I am getting.
(6) My college program, in general, has not been very good.
(7) College, in general, is not doing enough to prepare me for the life I'll lead after I graduate.

8. An analysis of the responses offered by these 258 students reveals the following facts relating to their attitudes Toward Education in General; numbers in parentheses being the total respondents in each program.

Animal Center Management (7) = 65% of "ideal" score as defined in paragraph 6 above.
52% of "maximum" score as defined in paragraph 7 above.

As the above percentages reveal, among these Animal Center Management respondents there are somewhat more extensive positive attitudes Toward Education in General, specifically as they relate to items (1) through (3) in paragraph 6 above, in comparison with items (4) through (7) in paragraph 7 above. This specific pinpointing of differences can assist concerned and responsible staff-faculty personnel in helping to develop more prevalent positive attitudes in the specific areas identified.

Animal Technician (66) = 72% (see par. 6 above)
52% (see par. 7 above)

Art (1) = 60% (see above)
60% (see above)

Bus. Mgt. (9) = 71% (see above)
32% (see above)

Commercial Art (2) = 80%
43%

Dramatic Art (1) = 50%
29%

E. C. E. (17) = 75%
16%

Education (1) = 93%
100%

Fashion Design (5)	=	71% 44%	Phys. Ed. (7)	=	41% 37%
General Studies (13)	=	77% 35%	Pre-Nursing (8)	=	75% 65%
Interior Design (7)	=	69% 45%	Retail Merch. (52)	=	77% 58%
Liberal Arts (11)	=	74% 45%	Secretarial (26)	=	77% 57%
Med. Lab. Tech. (7)	=	73% 50%	Social Service (10)	=	68% 43%
Med. Technology (5)	=	83% 65%	Tourism/Travel (3)	=	47% 63%

9. Scanning the above listing, it is immediately apparent that there is a wide variation in the perceptions of students enrolled in these Harcum programs of study. Insofar as their attitudes Toward Education in General are reflected by their responses to the 7 statements in the ASA questionnaire, those identified by the larger percentages expressed a more positive overall attitude than did those identified with the lower percentage figures. In every instance but one (the Education major - a single respondent), a more pervasive positive response was made to the 3 statements identified in paragraph 6 above than to the 4 statements included in paragraph 7 above.

10. It is therefore concluded that campus-wide, it might be well to place major emphasis upon those areas of the total College experience which are related to the latter 4 statements, since the average level of positive attitude here is 50% as contrasted with an average level of 70% for the other 3 statements.

11. Turning to the second general area assessed - Attitude Toward College Curriculum, the respondents in the various programs of study reacted to the following statements which were couched in 'positive' language:

(1) There is a great deal being taught at Harcum that is useful for me as a person.
(2) Most of the courses at Harcum are useful.
(3) Much of what I learn in college I can use in a job.

12. Conversely, the following two 'negative' statements also assessed other dimensions of attitudes toward program of study:

(4) The experiences I get in my college learning sessions have not really helped me to learn.
(5) Education, even vocational education, doesn't help with your job when you leave college.

The first percentage reported for each program is determined by the method described in paragraph 6 above, and the second percentage figure is determined by the method described in paragraph 7 above.

Animal Ctr. Mgt. (7)	=	64% 39%	Interior Design (7)	=	76% 47%
Animal Technician (66)	=	28% 55%	Liberal Arts (11)	=	47% 47%
Art (1)	=	87% 100%	Med. Lab Tech. (7)	=	77% 61%
Bus. Mgt. (9)	=	80% 57%	Med. Technology (5)	=	79% 71%
Commercial Art (1)	=	60% 67%	Phys. Ed. (7)	=	70% 42%
Dramatic Art (1)	=	47% 40%	Pre-Nursing (8)	=	82% 62%
E.C.E. (17)	=	71% 48%	Retail Merch. (52)	=	79% 68%
Education (1)	=	100% 25%	Secretarial (26)	=	84% 59%
Fashion Design (5)	=	67% 55%	Social Service (10)	=	61% 45%
Gen. Studies (13)	=	60% 40%	Tourism/Travel (3)	=	60% 57%

13. A wide variation is noted in the extent of positive attitudes Toward College Curriculum among respondents in the different programs of study. The average extent of positive attitudes relating to the 3 items included in paragraph 11 above is 69%. For the 2 items included in paragraph 12 above, it is 54%. Clearly then, it is the latter two items upon which greater emphasis should be placed in seeking to develop more pervasive attitudes towards these dimensions of Harcum curriculums.

14. The attitudes of this group of students Toward School Resources is assessed through responses to the following ASA items which were stated in 'positive' language:

(1) My college has a lot of books and equipment that I can use to help myself learn.
(2) I'd say Harcum was really worthwhile.
(3) I used many new materials to help me in my college work.
(4) My college uses a variety of ways to help us learn-not just a classroom & teacher.

15. Conversely, the following 5 statements, couched in 'negative' language, were designed to reveal other student attitudes relating to Harcum resources.

(5) The teachers at Harcum do not seem to know enough about what they're teaching.
(6) The facilities at Harcum are old and out-dated.
(7) My college does not have very good equipment to help learning.
(8) The people who run Harcum probably do not enjoy what they're doing.
(9) The teachers I have in my college are not very interesting.

16. As in previous listings, the first percentage number reported for each of the following curriculums was determined by the method described in paragraph 6 above, and the second percentage number was determined by the method described in paragraph 7 above.

Animal Ctr. Mgt. (7)	=	59% 47%	Interior Design (7)	=	65% 34%
Animal Technician (66)	=	59% 39%	Liberal Arts (11)	=	59% 40%
Art (1)	=	73% 93%	Med. Lab. Tech (7)	=	76% 58%
Bus. Mgt. (9)	=	57% 44%	Med. Technology (5)	=	75% 58%
Commercial Art (2)	=	73% 36%	Phys. Ed. (7)	=	71% 31%
Dramatic Art (1)	=	47% 36%	Pre-Nursing (8)	=	71% 48%
E.C.E. (17)	=	67% 47%	Retail Merch. (52)	=	72% 72%
Education (1)	=	93% 83%	Secretarial (26)	=	79% 53%
Fashion Design (5)	=	56% 35%	Social Service (10)	=	63% 43%
General Studies (13)	=	55% 7%	Tourism/Travel (3)	=	47% 40%

17. The above listing again reveals substantial variation in extent of expressed positive attitude - from a low of 7% to a high of 93%. However, the very high percentages reflect the attitudes of but single individuals and therefore may not be representative of the group in the particular program of study. The average level of positive attitudes relating to the items noted in paragraph 14 above was 66%. For those items included in paragraph 15 above the average was 47%. Here again, among these 9 specific items, it is the last 5 which elicit a less general positive attitude among these students.

18. The fourth and final area assessed was Attitudes Toward School Counseling. The extent of positive attitudes among students enrolled in the various curriculums are revealed in the following paragraphs. The two statements couched in positive language were:

(1) My college counseling program has shown me some interesting things about different careers.
(2) The counseling program at Harcum has been good for me.

19. The three items which were reversed for scoring, i.e., were 'negative' student statements included:

(3) There are very few people and places in my college that I can go to when I have a personal problem.

(4) Not much of the advice I have gotten in my college has helped me decide on what I want for my future.

(5) My college counseling program isn't really helping me get ready for things I'll do after I graduate.

20. As in prior listings, the first percentage number reported for each of the following curriculums was determined by the method described in paragraph 6 above. The second percentage was derived as described in paragraph 7 above.

Animal Ctr. Mgt. (7)	=	61% 53%	Interior Design (7)	=	54% 40%
Animal Technician (66)	=	48% 12%	Liberal Arts (11)	=	57% 26%
Art (1)	=	60% 33%	Med. Lab. Tech. (7)	=	61% 50%
Bus. Mgt. (9)	=	35% 31%	Med. Technology (5)	=	56% 43%
Commercial Art (2)	=	60% 33%	Phys. Ed. (7)	=	41% 33%
Dramatic Art (1)	=	50% 33%	Pre-Nursing (8)	=	68% 50%
E. C. E. (17)	=	55% 36%	Retail Mercn. (52)	=	49% 40%
Education (1)	=	70% 60%	Secretarial (26)	=	60% 61%
Fashion Design (5)	=	47% 39%	Social Service (10)	=	60% 60%
General Studies (13)	=	47% 52%	Tourism/Travel (3)	=	45% 40%

21. The average level of positive attitudes Toward School Counseling, as reflected in the 2 statements included in paragraph 18 above, is 54%. For the 3 statements included in paragraph 19 above it is 41%. Again, the areas represented by the latter three items would appear to be the ones in which the greatest potential improvement in positive attitudes exists.

22. Summarizing the extent of positive attitudes among these 258 students toward four major dimensions of the Harcum learning environment, the following tabulation lists the composite responses in descending order of extent of positive attitudes, expressed as a percentage of an 'ideal' score of 100% for each item:

Attitudes Toward:

Curriculum	=	62%
Education in General	=	60%
School Resources	=	56%
School Counseling	=	48%

23. Clearly, the most prevalent positive attitudes, campus-wide, were expressed in reference to Harcum programs of study. The least prevalent positive attitudes were expressed toward the various counseling efforts offered by the college community. This pinpoints an important dimension of the total learning-development process which can benefit from increased attention in the future.

24. If each student had, for each of the 26 statements in the ASA questionnaire, circled the most-positive score-value, this would have yielded an 'ideal' score of 100%. Therefore, the above summary may be interpreted to mean that for the first three listed areas, moderately positive attitudes (more than a majority in each case) are representative for this group of 258 students. For the last-listed item, less prevalent positive attitudes were expressed.

25. And finally - student-learner degrees of satisfaction with the Harcum learning environment, as reflected by the 26 attitude items included in the ASA questionnaire, are to be found in the following listing. If the composite, positive attitudes percentages for each program of study are listed in descending order of totals, the following rank-ordering occurs- the most prevalent positive attitudes being expressed by the first-listed group of respondents, the least-prevalent among those in the last program of study listed. Major attention should be directed to elevating the level of positive attitudes among those students enrolled in the higher numbered programs of study. The numbers in parentheses are the number of respondents in each program of study.

1. Education Associate (1 only)
2. Art (1 only)
3. Secretarial (26)
4. Med. Technology (5)
5. Pre-Nursing (8)
6. Retail Merchandising (52)
7. Med. Lab. Technician (7)
8. Commercial Art (2)
9. Social Service (10)
10. Animal Center Management (7)
11. Interior Design (7)
12. Fashion Design (5)
13. Early Childhood (13)
14. Business Management (9)
15. Tourism/Travel (3)
16. Liberal Arts (11)
17. General Studies (13)
18. Physical Education (7)
19. Animal Technician (66)
20. Dramatic Art (1 only)

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